

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 05141 151831Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 OMB-01 CIAE-00 PM-05 INR-10
L-03 ACDA-12 NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 SP-02 USIA-06
TRSE-00 EB-08 /089 W
-----122883 160525Z /15

R 151819Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5501
SECDEF WASHDC
INFO DA WASHDC
DSAA WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 05141

SECDEF FOR ISA/OSDR&E

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, MPOL, NATO, BE
SUBJECT: BELGIAN DEFENSE BUDGET

REF: BRUSSELS 3150 (NOTAL)

1. MEETINGS OF THE MINISTERIAL AD HOC BUDGET REVIEW
COMMITTEE (BRUSSELS 3015) ARE CONTINUING IN AN EFFORT
TO FIND RESOURCES TO USE TO FILL A 1978 CURRENT BUDGET
SHORTFALL ESTIMATED BY DIFFERENT SOURCES AS TOTALLING
65 TO 100 BILLION BF.

2. WELL-PLACED SOURCES IN THE MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE HAVE REVIEWED FOR US WHAT THE
LIKELY IMPACT MIGHT BE ON THE BUDGET FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE
AND HOW CERTAIN SPECIFIC PROGRAMS MIGHT BE AFFECTED.

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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 05141 151831Z

3. THE ANNUAL INCREASE IN THE BELGIAN NATIONAL DEFENSE
BUDGET HAD BEEN PROJECTED FOR TEN YEARS WITH AN ANNUAL
INCREASE OF 4 PERCENT IN CONSTANT TERMS. THIS NO LONGER
APPEARS FEASIBLE IN VIEW OF THE BUDGET CRISIS. CURRENT
EFFORTS ARE DIRECTED TO MAINTAINING A 2 PERCENT ANNUAL
INCREASE IN CONSTANT TERMS.

4. IF THE NATIONAL DEFENSE BUDGET CAN BE MAINTAINED WITH A 2 PERCENT INCREASE, IT WOULD PROBABLY BE POSSIBLE FOR BELGIUM TO PARTICIPATE IN HAWK-HELIP (BRUSSELS 4256); TO ACQUIRE THE ARMoured VEHICLES IT NEEDS TO REPLACE ITS AGING FLEET (BRUSSELS 4429), THOUGH A DEFERRED PAYMENT SCHEDULE FOR TWO TO THREE YEARS WOULD NEED TO BE WORKED OUT; AND TO DO SOMETHING TO MEET THE SALARY DEMANDS OF THE MILITARY (BRUSSELS 4379). IT DOES NOT APPEAR LIKELY THAT BELGIUM WOULD BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE AWACS PROGRAM (BRUSSELS 1513). THE F-16 PROGRAM, WHICH IS COSTING HEAVILY IN INITIAL OUTLAYS, IS NOT IN DANGER.

5. COMMENT: WE WERE NOT TOLD WHETHER THE PROBABLE SCALING BACK OF THE DEFENSE BUDGET FROM A FOUR TO TWO PERCENT ANNUAL INCREASE WOULD BE A SHORTRUN MEASURE OR WHETHER IT WOULD CONTINUE AS PART OF A TEN YEAR PROJECTION. AT THIS POINT, GIVEN THE ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES IN BELGIUM, IT IS LIKELY THAT NO LONGTERM PROJECTIONS ARE BEING WORKED OUT. CHAMBERS

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